

CONSUMERS' EDUCATION AND INFORMATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THEIR AWARENESS AND ECOLOGICAL BEHAVIOUR

The right to education and information is one of the most important consumer's rights. It plays a key role in achieving all other consumer's rights for only through education and information consumers will be able to exercise the full freedom of informed choice.

The consumer must be informed, educated, trained and instructed on how he or she can assess and evaluate products, including the eco ones. Educating and informing consumers aim at making them able to choose discerningly and to comprehend fully their rights and responsibilities.

Given the global environmental crisis facing humanity, and the increasing requirement for a sustainable development strategy, namely eco-development, at both national and international levels, it is necessary that every citizen, as a consumer, knowing the current realities and considering them during purchasing and consumption activities. In other words, today more than ever there is a need for ecological consciousness and consumers' behaviour training, as they will contribute to a wiser and more rational attitude towards the environment.

Sustainable development is assumed to "ensure the current needs without impeding the future ones". This approach focuses on how the raw materials are used, the impact economic activities have on the environment, but also on how consumers choose to consume certain products.

Natural environment has become increasingly important in consumer behaviour. All man's consumption and production activities are beginning to influence, unfortunately in a negative way, the state of environment. Consumers are also responsible, to a considerable extent, for acid rains, greenhouse effect, ozone depletion and waste.

Some of the suggestions and projects under consideration are those of extending products' life cycle (operating life) and of mostly recyclable raw materials used. Moreover, diminishing the consumption of raw materials that would reduce the negative impact of economic activities is to be considered and implemented. European Union designed and developed a number of tools focused on environmental protection. The main areas covered by them are: the laws and regulations relating to environmental standards, economic tools and procedures to encourage production and use of products and processes "environmentally friendly", as well as supporting measures such as financial ones (funds and grants), information, education and research.

Modern consumers do need guarantees in respect of purchased products regarding their "green-ing" (turning eco). This is why national governments and international

institutions tried to manage, through regulations, the problem. Romania, as part of European Union, borrowed and complied with its philosophy on eco- products. However, there is a difference between what is legally regulated and what various customers groups understand therefore, requiring a thorough study of consumers 'environmental behaviour.

Understanding consumers' attitudes, knowledge and behaviour is of major importance for policy makers in establishing policies and legislation in the areas and plans of development. The purpose of this issue on *"Educating and informing consumers in terms of their environmental consciousness and behaviour"* is to explore the concept of consumers' environmental consciousness and behaviour and to highlight methods and tools that can be used to achieve the right consumers' education and information regarding organic products.

Presenting various views on the theme *"Educating and informing consumers in terms of their environmental consciousness and behaviour,"* the authors will be provided with the opportunity to highlight advanced studies related to eco-consumption in Romania and Romanian consumer's behaviour regarding organic products. It also creates the possibility of bringing to the forefront, various ways and tools for improving the strategies focused on a better understanding of Romanian consumer, his/her perceptions and attitudes towards organic products and his/her consumption habits.

The research of consumer's behaviour is currently a priority in terms of perceptions, attitudes and benefits consumers perceive linked to organic products. The products bringing added value to health and environment, such as organic products, turn market competitive only if the average consumer will understand these products benefits. Studying the conceptualization of how people think about products and their purchase, of their attitude to diet and understanding the relation between diet and health are all parts of multidisciplinary research that crosses social and natural sciences, synthetically creating the Consumer science.

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